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Henry Green's pigeons

Birds and certain varieties of birds have long been potent symbols related to war and conflict. But as airplane technologies developed in rapid tandem with the coming and arrival of the Second World War, the connection between avian and aviation reached new heights in the cultural imagination. The symbolism of doves, for instance, takes on unsettling connotations in T. S. Eliot's "Little Gidding" (1942), where a descending dove breaks through the air with flames of incandescent terror, controversially representing the Holy Spirit in the form of a German dive-bomber. The painter Paul Nash, much of whose oeuvre relates to his fascination with flying or downed aircraft, compared different "species" of planes to birds, calling the Whitley bomber "a queer bird-like creature…. A dove of death."[1] Swallows, meanwhile, feature in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts* (1941), their historical flight trajectory connecting continents as well as epochs. The subsequent intrusion by modern aircraft, by "[t]welve aeroplanes in perfect formation like a flight of wild duck," in turn anticipates Michael Powell's and Emeric Pressburger's *A Canterbury Tale* (1944): a film whose famous jump-cuts splice the image of a soaring falcon in medieval England with that of a Spitfire during the Second World War present.[2]

With birds like planes and planes like ducks, much cultural production surrounding the Second World War chimes the military with the ornithological. Their visual resemblance, of course, was much remarked upon beyond the realm of art, causing no shortage of anxiety even during the interwar years. Notorious cases in which one was confused for the other are recounted in aerial warfare "prophet" Giulio Douhet's influential book *The Command of the Air* (1921), including a panicked moment at Brescia when mourners at the funeral services for victims of an earlier bombing mistook a bird for an enemy plane.[3] Later, the first British fighter pilot casualty of the Second World War occurred when a flock of geese was misidentified by

ground observers as a formation of high-altitude enemy aircraft; two squadrons of fighters were scrambled as a result and attacked each other in friendly fire.[4]

While birds represented the culture of total war in a myriad of ways, conversely, they also reflected particular understandings of British national and social identity. Even before war began, ecological wildlife and landscape were held up as aspects of heritage under threat of global conflict; this, coupled with concerns over the despoliation of the countryside by industrial modernity, were countered by images of "Beautiful Britain" that "asserted the continuing existence of a landscape in which it was increasingly hard to believe."[5] The Shell Guides of the 1930s, especially, illustrated by artists including John Piper and Nash, celebrated the countryside and the nation's local antiquities through the aerial perspective.

The fixation on nature continued after war's outbreak. Julian Huxley, popular birdwatcher and director of the Zoological Society of London, claimed in his wartime BBC radio talks that birds had special importance because they were "the means by which the individual may orientate himself to the country."[6] Where the eagle came to represent Nazi Germany (the Luftwaffe's attack on Britain was codenamed the *Adlerangriff* [eagle attack], the Berchtesgaden was called the *Adlernest* [eagle's nest]), the yellowhammer and the turtledove, Huxley stated, were "*expressions*" of the nation and represented the calm pastoral of the midsummer British countryside.[7] Indeed, the question of how "British" certain birds were became a wartime preoccupation. According to Helen Macdonald, species like the robin were often compared to cousins on the other side of the Channel, and Norfolk farmers, upon discovering that the skylarks eating their corn came from the continent, overturned their county council's proposed bird protection measures on the basis that "Skylarks that sing to Nazis will get no mercy here," as press headlines declared.[8]

For birds were hardly just birds: "they were loaded with symbolic effect"—and affect—"increasingly derived from versions of national identity."[9] This latter point is succinctly conveyed by *Tawny Pipit* (1944), the film directed by Bernard Miles and Charles Saunders that acts both as a

contrast and complement to *A Canterbury Tale*. Centring on the discovery of rare birds in an English village by a fighter pilot and his girlfriend, the film emphasises that "Love of animals and nature is part and parcel of the British way of life," as one character says. It ends with an aerial view of the fighter plane flying over a church and its environs while villagers sing a hymn to give thanks for the pipits' survival. With the plane renamed *Anthus Campestris*, the scientific name for tawny pipit, the links between English land and history, severed by the violence of war, are reunited once more.

How do we reconcile these two, seemingly contradictory readings of birds in the late thirties and forties: as aerial bombardment and death from above, on the one hand, and as "the heritage we are fighting for," to quote from James Fisher's *Watching Birds* (1940), on the other? [10]

The answer requires grasping how wartime experience was understood in the two decades prior to the Second World War. As modernist scholarship of late as shown, after the conclusion of the First World War, aesthetic innovation and production were nevertheless influenced by apprehensions of future war and total war. Sarah Cole, for example, has charted how a temporality of incipience with respect to violence inflects modernist aesthetics, which increasingly recognised its own position as being between wars.[11] Meanwhile, Jan Mieszkowski has argued that the discourse and theorization of total war came into its own after the First World War, when military achievements began to be judged against future triumphs or defeats in relation to a "super conflict" that may or may not come to pass; the modern military culture became one where "military praxis is always as much a virtual as an actual struggle."[12] For Paul Saint-Amour, the modernist period registers the state of "perpetual interwar" as an everyday condition: the sense that one resided not only between the World Wars, but within the breathing spaces of ongoing global cataclysms more generally.[13] During the twenties and thirties, the notion of wartime extended beyond the boundaried duration of a specific conflict to suggest the affective shape of "the complete militarization of existence". [14] This brings a fresh and important

perspective to Henry Green's persistent use of a seemingly innocuous bird, the pigeon, as trope and image in his novels of the time.

Party Going (1939) begins with a dead pigeon that drops out of nowhere to disrupt the travels of the story's bright young things, and that gestures towards war's joint physical and socio-political, if indeterminate, convulsions. The pigeon's specific meanings, however much debated, remain elusive and obscure. It "reaches at times the intensity of a symbol, but lacks all precision of reference and consistency," one critic observes.[15] "[I]t looks as if the image of a dead bird has been displaced from somewhere else," notes another.[16] As any reader familiar with Green will know, it is indeed displaced from elsewhere: from his earlier novel about factory life in Birmingham, touted as "the finest proletarian novel of the period," *Living* (1929).[17] And as this essay will argue, the legibility of Green's pigeons, or rather their insistent illegibility, rests as much on the way his narratives variously attempt to shift between socio-economic classes as it does on the consciousness of an imminent world war whose tactics are reliant on air power to inflict immediate and indiscriminate violence. Green's birds are not indicative of an unchanging pastoral heritage, but of a radically changing, still ungraspable, socio- and geo-political landscape: one that portends unprecedented change on the level and scale of the unremarkable and the ordinary, as the idea of war became increasingly mundane, even as its anticipation became increasingly fraught.

While taking into consideration the recalcitrance of Green's late modernism and his often irreverent style, I argue that the pigeons' flight path through his interwar novels captures particular changes in the zeitgeist: not only in terms of fears of aerial bombardment, but of 1930s realism and the "knowability" of the nation as embodied by the vogue in social anthropology. As James Buzard and others have pointed out, this was a period that reprised the mid-Victorian "'Condition of England question,' the perception of Two Nations unhappily coexisting in Britain."[18] In the same way that the earlier tradition is characterised by "a representative of one class [who] consciously sets out to explore, analyse and report upon, the life of another class

lower in the social scale than his own," leftist writers in the thirties like George Orwell and J. B. Priestley investigated the "other" England in their fiction and non-fiction.[19] Both Valentine Cunningham and Carol Wipf-Miller, borrowing from Marxist rhetoric, have called this the bourgeois propensity for "going over"; Buzard uses the term "auto-ethnography" to highlight not only the interest in one's ethnography, but how such interest can emphasise social difference rather than similarity.[20]

The son of a wealthy industrialist and a member of the aristocratic class, Green went "over", though in a self-conscious and uneasy sense. He learned to negotiate between "the radical individualism of modernism and the collective identity privileged by the new realism," Wipf-Miller argues.[21] However, his interwar texts chart a growing ambivalence not just about one's capacity to "go over," but about how one can know either of the Two Nations in light of the instability of the late twenties and thirties, and the undetermined but anticipated effects of global war on British society. By reading Green's pigeons against what social anthropology is in part driven by but cannot predict—war's impacts on the civilian psyche, and on British class and social structure—their intractability as tropes renders, precisely, the uncertainty that was both in the air and on the ground. Along the way, we will need to assess Green's appropriation of two other cultural tropes of the 1930s, the aerial view and the grounded view, as well as the various forms in which interwar observation was itself understood—including as bird-watching.

Interwar cultures of observation: new ornithology and social anthropology

Green can be said to be a kind of observer. With a reputation for being detached from his subjects, for being "an 'invisible artist'" who is "aloof from his material," who "does not tell you what his characters think nor assume their points of view; he sees through no single mind," his narratives are noted for remarking upon the seen and the heard rather than the known and the explicated.[22] For James Wood, Green "never internalizes his characters' thoughts [and] hardly ever explains a character's motive," and while not a primary author in her study, Jessica Burstein

considers Green to be a "cold modernist" who rejects the typically modernist preoccupation with interiority in favour of exteriority and "the prosthetic, the copy, and imitation."[23] In Beci Carver's, analysis Green and other "granular modernists" sustain "techniques of irrelevance, plotlessness, miscellaneousness, convolution and confusion... in an attempt to describe *a semi-aware exercise in futility*" rather than in relevance and meaning.[24]

Where his "observational" style suggests distance, on the one hand, it suggests intimate knowledge, on the other. Green's valorisation of detachment and the errant are often supported by reflections on his astuteness as an observer of social behaviour, particularly his "genius for speech, especially working-class, regional and dialect speech" and his interest in "a total immersion in the daily, indeterminate flux of… ordinary moments in ordinary lives."[25] However, his attention to the bathetic, the uneventful, and the deflationary is far from frivolous. As commentary on the need to recuperate and reconsider the openness and contingency of everyday life, Green's writing strives to convey opacity and possibility to render a lived experience that escapes coherence or totality. Early in his career, he developed an interest in Chekhov's concept of significant irrelevance, which might make the case: "Irrelevancy means so much… it shows you what a person is & how he thinks, & conveys atmosphere that is inconceivable…"[26] His eventual fixation with hollowness and nothingness, then (and the title of a later book is *Nothing* [1950]), is itself something.

Nick Shepley notes that Green is "attun[ed] to the everyday, where the transformative or the transcendent, evental or epiphanic, is either turned against or at least quickly subsumed by the quotidian flow, where significance is continually put off or subverted and where relevance is repeatedly in doubt."[27] While this is certainly the case across Green's oeuvre, the writer formulated his thoughts on significant irrelevancy in the mid- to late twenties, when a preoccupation with the everyday was taking hold on a socio-cultural level. It was a time when an interest in the everyday, in and of itself, jostled against the desire to analyse and find its broader significance. Indeed, attention to the quotidian took on the form of observation itself: an activity

that combines the trivial and the uneventful with an eye for discerning meaning and pattern. But this was also a time when everyday life was slowly changing in relation to war as an expected phenomenon, and to war as a phenomenon of everyday life. While Green's prose is notoriously fluid in metaphor and meaning—and while it is not my intention to delimit its interpretive possibilities—his writing's open-endedness and slipperiness generate a perplexity with historical resonance. By briefly considering some of the cultures of collective observation which emerged contemporaneously in his time, this essay aims to show how and why Green's poetics of delayed significance and doubtful relevance were thrown into relief, and complicated, by the political and epistemic uncertainties of the day.

From the twenties onward, various networks of amateur field observers were established for the purposes of observing and collecting information on environmental and social life. Catalysed by the socio-political changes inflecting the country at large, their ground-level fieldwork was both evidence of, and a reaction to, these transformations. One such prominent observatory body was the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). Established in 1932 by Max Nicholson, it was founded to mobilize bird-watchers "to undertake co-ordinated research throughout the British Isles." [28] Propounding a "new ornithology" that differed from the amateur naturalism of previous decades, the BTO focused on collective as well as private observation, and on uniform, standardised practices which included group fieldwork and information-gathering techniques for tracking different species and migration patterns. Advising birdwatchers to buy various maps for recording birds, including "a 1-inch ordnance map of the whole district, 6-inch map of local surroundings, and… 25-inch map of the immediate neighbourhood upon which they could mark the distribution of local bird species," it promoted the inter-mapping of the local, the regional, and the national through the bird and the birdwatcher.[29] With this, "[t]he Observer oriented himself to the nation through specific acts of vision and bird identification, literally inscribing his presence upon the nation's maps: a powerful act, tying observer and nation together through scientific survey."[30] More generally, the BTO formulated a centralised, national

archive by constellating local and locational observations, even from one's back garden. By *Tawny Pipit*, the wide cast of characters to arrive in the rural countryside—from nightclubbers as land girls and cockney kids as evacuees—would be purportedly improved, physically and spiritually, through their contact with the landscape and with the pipits.[31] But even before that, communing with nature, and with birds in particular, was seen as a transformative activity that led to what Nicholson called "more constructive work" for both the individual and the country.[32] The BTO's goal was "to find the link between ordinary nature, witnessed locally, and the whole; to connect the observation of nature in particular localities and to the progressivist planning of the nation."[33]

So important and widespread was bird-watching at this time that it was considered a manifestation of a "popular unconscious" and deemed worthy of in-depth social investigation by a different, more well-known interwar observatory body, Mass Observation (MO).[34] Founded by the poet Charles Madge, the anthropologist Tom Harrisson, and the Surrealist filmmaker Humphrey Jennings, MO was created in 1937 to collect data on the everyday life of people from different socio-economic classes around the country. Like the BTO, MO was driven by networks of amateur, volunteer observers, and for both, instruction sheets and record cards became core aspects of their methodologies of public data collection.[35] The connections between the local and the national defines this organization, which began as an amalgamation of two projects that were ideologically linked, but that employed different techniques of information-gathering. The first, the Worktown Project, was undertaken by Harrisson and a team of investigators in Bolton, and it concerned the direct observation and recording of people's behaviour and conversations in public venues and events. The second, the "National Panel", recruited observers from around Britain through newspaper and radio advertisements, and it assembled diaries and open-ended questionnaires or "day reports" on the quotidian details of everyday life from volunteers. Believing that the personal and the social shaped each other in fundamental ways, MO wavered uneasily between democratic and autocratic compulsions: between the impulse to represent

contradiction, the messy empirical reality of everyday life, and the need to present a synthesising or generalizing perspective to emphasise the coherence of this heterogeneity. Its subject, and the title of one of its first publications, was nothing less than *Britain by Mass Observation* (1939).[36]

Given one's focus on the avian and the other on the human and social, the BTO and MO were fundamentally different institutions of observation. It is beyond the remit of this essay to document their full histories, which are very complex to say the least, and which have been undertaken elsewhere.[37] But they are linked in their methodologies of field observation—in "their stress on close detachment, their assessment of organisms in their own environment"—and in their commitment to apprehending local geographies with a view to understanding their broader resonances.[38] They also share a politics of egalitarianism. Professionals and amateurs alike were welcomed into the BTO as any "fit and proper person of good behaviour" with an interest in birds could be an observer[39]. Meanwhile, MO made persistent claims to openness and social heterogeneity by letting the "people speak for themselves" (a tagline that appeared more than once in their promotions material), and by striving "to make the knowledge of 'who we are' no longer the preserve of 'the scientific specialists, most of whose lives are spent in laboratories and lecture rooms'"[40]—though as a project founded and managed by the public-school-educated, upper-middle classes, it could never fully escape charges of socio-economic voyeurism or of exoticising the "mass."[41]

Furthermore, there are clear historical synergies between the two. From the beginning, MO borrowed heavily from science, especially from bird-watching, and Julian Huxley wrote in his foreword to MO's initial 1937 pamphlet that the organization's work "may be compared with a great deal of bird-watching and natural history observation."[42] Similarly, Harrisson described Mass Observers as "approaching the study of Britons rather as if they were birds, emphasising seen behaviour or overheard conversations."[43] He had an early background in ornithology before he became an anthropologist, and he helped Nicholson to recruit and coordinate observers for the bird census in the early thirties.[44] Harrisson would continue to invoke bird-watching by way

of comparison during his involvement with MO; in a 1942 article for the *Sociological Review*, for example, he returned to his bird-watching experiences in Harrow to illustrate his own points about British social hierarchies.[45]

A bourgeois writer who wanted "to see for [him]self how by far the greatest number live in England," Green too can be said to observe everyday life with "close detachment."[46] Sympathetic to and fascinated with the working class, he engaged in "a double gesture of association and disavowal": one that also defines his relationship to the epistemologies of interwar cultures of observation, which he found promising but eventually inadequate for visualising social life.[47] To be sure, his motivation for working in his father's foundry was to conduct his own "ethnographic fieldwork," and he shared the interest in creating a wider social portrait out of the local. In the same way that new ornithology elevated the observation of birds to a living archive of national heritage, and in the same way that MO, spurred by the national crisis of Edward VIII's abdication, created surveys to understand the mutual impact between the local and the national to create an "anthropological study of our own situation," Green's work in the late twenties focuses on the "Other" nation to relate it to his own.[48]

And yet, by the late thirties, his understanding of observation would change. The interregnum saw the collapse of British industry, the rise of fascism in Europe, and impending world war. The confusion between bird and plane, and fears of the bomber, would unravel against the epistemological lacunae of the "shape of things to come," to quote from the title of H. G. Wells' very war-anxious book (1933). In addition to psychological debilitation (over four million cases were expected in the first six months of conflict), war's effects on class and social structure were a particular worry.[49] While some believed that morale could be determined by "class, [and] to a greater extent [by] the density of the population" in various parts of the country, others, like prominent psychiatrist Maurice Wright, perceived that a "war directed against a civilian population exempts no one, excludes no one."[50] Quoting from Tom Jeffery, Buzard remarks: "[T]he social crisis in Britain between 1936 and 1939 differed from those earlier

spasms of 1918 to 1924 and 1929 to 1933 in that it was felt as 'affecting all classes with equal intensity,' as 'characterised not by class conflict but by a felt need for national unity.'"[51] Thus by 1940, the *Times* argued that the war exposed inequities not only abroad but at home, and that a new social order—one that "cannot be based on the preservation of privilege, whether the privilege be that of a country, of a class, or of an individual"—is needed.[52] This idea would both appeal to and trouble those from more privileged backgrounds, including Green, for whom taxation—one of the suggested methods of financing the war effort—would especially take a toll.[53]

Contextualized thus, interwar cultures of observation like new ornithology and social anthropology seem nostalgic and even elegiac, coming into formation for studying what "makes" Britain at a time when the country was on the verge of tumultuous, unknowable, change. This was part of the overall cultural interest in auto-ethnography, and part of the "anthropological turn" which saw the "repatriation" of colonial anthropology for analysing life at home.[54] According to Jed Esty's familiar argument, the thirties were characterised by the "discursive process by which English intellectuals translated the end of empire into a resurgent concept of national culture," and this inversion is not unrelated to the conspicuous focus on understanding England and Britain, both as geographies and as socio-political concepts and constructs.[55] Certainly, one can and should challenge this thesis, and there was a strain of writers at this time whose literary and geopolitical agendas were far from nationally parochial, and who were markedly internationalist and pacifist.[56] However, Green's ambivalent politics present a problem in this regard. He himself admitted that he wrote "without holding any political views," and his complicated position makes him, in Marina MacKay's assessment, a "throwback to Tory radicalism."[57]

Against the backdrop of the Spanish Civil War, the Second Sino-Japanese War, and the New Deal in the United States, not to mention the abdication crisis in Britain in the thirties, anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski stated that he valued MO for its essential humanism. In his

afterword to MO's book *First Year's Work, 1937-38* (1938), he wrote: MO is "a useful instrument of scientific research, but [it] may [also] become an extremely important practical contribution to the maintenance of human civilisation where it still survives."[58] What he wrote of his earlier anthropology in 1922 also takes on doubled meaning: "Just now, when the methods and aims of scientific field ethnology have taken shape…these die away under our very eyes." [59] The pursuit of auto-ethnographic knowledge as it was slipping away and changing, even while being observed, is a story that Green's pigeons index between 1929 and 1939.

'pigeon have an irritating knack of homing': from *Living* to *Party Going*

Although the appearance of birds in Green's work has been much remarked, he had a lifelong fascination with pigeons in particular.[60] One of the fields in the area beyond the garden of his childhood family home was called Pigeonhouse Field, named for the many birds that flew in and out of the trees.[61] His interest continued throughout his schooldays, where his hobbies included keeping caterpillars and watching homing pigeons around Sevenoaks, and it persisted to his time at Oxford University, which he left early to work at his father's Birmingham factory. A self-proclaimed "mouthbreather with a silver spoon," he wanted to learn the family business, but he admitted that this was also anthropological fieldwork: "I want badly to write a novel about working men."[62] Applying himself assiduously to studying and rendering the habits of factory workers, Green "took a Balzacian relish in domestic minutiae of haircream, pigeons, babies, the geometry of washing on a line, as well as the language of the people he lived and worked with," Jeremy Treglown notes in his biography.[63] In his private notebooks, Green copied down the idioms and speech rhythms of the working class, and he was deeply interested in racing pigeons, both as a bird and as a pastime that he had taken up with his new co-workers.[64] In Spring 1928, Green went on a business trip with his father, travelling from New York to Mexico through

New Orleans. On board, flocks of migrating birds travelled with them, and this became a core image of his second novel, *Living*.[65]

The image of roosting racing pigeons, which he had observed in Birmingham, grounds his text equally, and this is a naturalistic element of Green's literary ethnography. Although interwar bird-watching was primarily understood as a rural activity, while pigeon racing was a largely urban pastime, the latter represented and cultivated particular understandings of social (in this case, working-class) identity. In 1938, the International Pigeon Board stated that "[t]he great majority of the Union affiliated to the Board (some 120,000 in number) are working men, who take a very great interest in their sport," one that helped to foster and strengthen communities of working-class enthusiasts.[66] Therefore, while "the overwhelming concentration of pigeon keeping in urban areas suggests that its appeal may have been particularly salient for men disconnected from nature," Martin Johnes writes, "[i]t was not an instinctive need for nature that underpinned pigeon racing but the more social desires for solitude, sociability, status and intellectual rewards."[67] Breeders even projected their own values onto their birds, taking pride in what they claimed to be the pigeons' "wonderful courage and stamina."[68]

Given such evocative weight, it should come as no surprise that, at its publication, *Living* was received as "a work that combined the detachment of anthropology with an intense kind of poetry," and poetic anthropology characterises not only the language and dialect of the working class, but the idea of the pigeon that Green found so essential to his experience in Birmingham.[69] For reviewers, the imagery of pigeons was integral to the novel's "truthful" depiction of working-class life, and the novel is still widely seen to have anticipated by a few years the social-realist novels that came to typify the thirties proper. The desire for representing the "Other" nation is one in which Green appears to indulge, and the overall result is an endearingly ordinary and uneventful portrait of Birmingham. In *Living*, people go to and from work, fight and reconcile, court and get married, attempt to leave town but come home. The most unremarkable activities are detailed, such as a person taking a meal or picking his nose. The novel is

observational in fleshing out the characters' relationships to the community of Bridesley, and Green does so in his typically detached style, as characters are presented without hierarchization. Incursions into deep interiority are minimal; the focus is on what people say and what they do, as in this opening scene:

> Bridesley, Birmingham.
>
> Two o'clock. Thousands came back from dinner along streets.
>
> 'What we want is go, push,' said works manager to son of Mr Dupret. 'What I say to them is—let's get on with it, let's get the stuff out.'
>
> Thousands came back to factories they worked in from their dinners.
>
> 'I'm always at them but they know me. They know I'm a father and mother to them. If they're in trouble they've but to come to me. And they turn out beautiful work, beautiful work. I'd do anything for 'em and they know it.'
>
> Noise of lathes working began again in this factory. Hundreds went along road outside, men and girls. Some turned in to Dupret factory.[70]

Most of the novel is written in this way, with an emphasis on sparse presentation. The perspectival oscillation between the distant and the near, the aerial and the grounded, helps to drive home the implicit diorama of the narrative, the way that Dupret and the "thousands" relate to Bridesley and to *Living* more generally. Treglown has suggested that Green was influenced by nineteenth-century French fiction at this time, not only by Zola's sociological ambitions but by the way the latter "record[ed] 'scientifically' the prosaic details of everyday life and the structures of class and power they expressed."[71] Certainly, in drawing together the ordinary details of working and domestic life, Green's Birmingham has an incipient "Worktown" feel to it.

Green's oscillatory style is not just visual, but socio-economic, and the scene that immediately follows takes place on the factory floor. Alternating between the working and upper

classes, though focusing more on the former than the latter, the narrative evokes the kind of cross-class montage that became prominent in 1930s documentary film. Lara Feigel has suggested that montage's "jerky movement from one shot to the next… forc[es] a more active process of viewing and bodily identification which necessitates analysis" of what is seen and, by extension, of social hegemonies.[72] But in doing so, *Living* implies social cohesion. As Buzard writes, "the bourgeois social researcher's efforts to understand the culture of that Other Nation would be carried on *with the ultimate purpose of subsuming that culture within the national whole*."[73] The lofty narrative perspective in *Living* undertakes a comparable kind of subsumption, and social unity is further suggested by the narrative parity between characters. The novel is as much about the factory owner's son Dick Dupret as it is about the working-class Lily Gates, both of whom are mirrored in their attempts to break away from their parents' influence and in their mutual entanglement in different love triangles.

The novel's cinematic aesthetics also anticipate the way that the aerial view would be appropriated in the early thirties for visualising social totality.[74] The early thirties poetry of W. H. Auden in particular, who was an admirer of Green, addresses the nation from this high vantage point—though it is telling that his emblematic poem stating, "Look, stranger, at this island now", refers to the Isle of Wight before Great Britain as a whole, therefore emphasising the regional underpinning the national.[75] In another, more famous poem that opens with the aerial view, the speaker looks down at the tea parties of the idle rich as well as the landscapes of industrial England from up above to suggest both national totality as well as social and geographical variety:

> Consider this and in our time
> As the hawk sees it or the helmeted airman:
> The clouds rift suddenly—look there

At cigarette-end smouldering on a border

At the first garden party of the year.

…

Join there the insufficient units

Dangerous, easy, in furs, in uniform

And constellated at reserved tables

Supplied with feelings by an efficient band

Relayed elsewhere to farmers and their dogs

Sitting in kitchens in the stormy fens.[76]

Although the disdain for social privilege in this poem is held in tension with the speaker's aerial perspective—he remains detached from his subjects and is able to look "down" at all of England, and exhort the reader, "supreme Antagonist," and financier to "look," "pass on," "join," "mobilise"—the rhetoric is not exactly that of unchanging imperative apostrophe. The viewpoint changes quickly as the speaker then sees from inside the Sports Hotel, rather than from up above. And while the lines' "persistent definiteness of articles signals epistemological and hermeneutical mastery," the poem goes on to emphasise the relationship between different localities and regions (including Cornwall, Mendip, and the Pennines) such that Auden underscores the complexity and elusiveness underpinning any representation of social totality.[77]

Living's narrator also maintains a panoramic perspective overall, but he makes occasional, eccentric outbursts about his inability to comprehend or help his characters. "Explanation kills life," Green once stated, and his writing is consistently committed to affirming the opacity of human psychology.[78] However, in the same way that interwar bird-watching emphasised both the aerial and the grounded views, where the macro-level mapping of bird locations and movements corroborated notes taken from one's back garden, the novel's use of perspective continues to advance a particular understanding of the working class through the worm's-eye view. In scenes

of Lily looking up and seeing flocks of pigeons passing by, for instance, Green suggests that she and others desire to escape working-class life, but that it is impossible for them to divest their familial and geographical roots. Birds represent the group identity from which Lily wants to fly away, but to which she is always tied. Like homing pigeons that fly long distances and that are trained to come home, she inevitably returns to her own aviary and flock; her attempt to immigrate to Canada takes her no further than Liverpool, where she is forced to return to her grandfather figure Craigan at the Birmingham factory after her boyfriend unceremoniously leaves her when he fails to find his own parents. "As… the housewives on a Sunday will go out, in their aprons, carrying a pigeon and throw this one up and it will climb in spirals up in the air, then when it has reached a sufficient height it will drop down plumb into the apron she holds out for it, so Miss Gates, in her thoughts… was always coming bump back again to Mr Craigan" (348). Compelled to return home by the gravity of her attachments, Lily exemplifies the ambivalent way in which Green's characterisation of the working class suggests "a liking for the cultural specificities of class difference [that] becomes almost tautologically compatible with an interest in their perpetuation," to borrow from MacKay's phrase.[79] The immobility of Lily, Mrs. Eames, and the "housewives" are deterministically grounded in and through pigeon imagery.

Given that *Living* was composed a few years after the General Strike of 1926 and during the latent stages of the Great Depression, events that augured to redefine the nation's previously stratified class identities, Green's ethnography of Birmingham life seems inevitably belated. On one hand, the novel does seem to imply that some socio-economic upheaval is imminent and in order: the continuous alternation between the middle and lower classes in the narrative suggests fluidity and interpenetration. This is bolstered by the image of the hole-ridden factory roof and windows which allow the sparrows to invade the building; the workers feed them crumbs and bet on them, and they become the objects of another kind of bird fancying. "[Y]ou can't stop it. You can't keep the sparrows out," the works manager complains. "I've had a man on the roof three weeks now patching holes they come in by. But they find a way" (208). His remarks

suggest the workers' determination and ambitions for pursuing their own paths beyond what is expected of them or prescribed.

On the other hand, Green's treatment of the working classes appear predictable and limited. Even the novel's style of omitting articles, the lack of *a, this, that, the*, which would suggest the opposite of "hermeneutical mastery," is part of a specific design. Not only has Green suggested that these quirks are ways to make the language more "taut and spare… to fit the proletarian life I was leading," as examples like "it might be flock of pigeons flying in the sky" and "Sparrows flew by belts that ran from lathes on floor up to shafting above by skylights" show, they enable textual re-enactments of the tension between the particular and the generic, between the individual and the collective: themes which are at the heart of *Living*'s portrayal of the working class (340, 208).[80] The syncopated grammar and chiasmic use of singular and plural reinforce the idea of pulling against one's roots, a subject that is also signposted by the re-appearance of the novel's epigraph at the end: "As these birds would go where so where would this child go?" (208). The style could even be said to reveal Green's own educated background. As Auden noted in his review of the book, *Living* involves "[t]he use of reported speech as in the later George Moore, and the omission of the definite article as in Anglo-Saxon poetry"—the latter being a subject that both he and Green studied at Oxford.[81]

But if "pigeon have an irritating knack of homing so our thoughts are coming back," as Craigan says, and if we are to do some textual bird-watching of our own, what are we to make of the pigeon that reappears ten years later in a train station, in *Party Going* (369)? Compare the opening of the latter text with the former:

> Fog was so dense, bird that had been disturbed went flat into a balustrade and slowly fell, dead, at her feet.
>
> There it lay and Miss Fellowes looked up to where that pall of fog was twenty foot above and out of which it had fallen over once. She bent down and took a wing

> then entered a tunnel in front of her, and this had DEPARTURES lit up over it, carrying her dead pigeon. (384)

Beginning with the grounded rather than the aerial view, Green's novel foregrounds unknowingness and ambiguity. Instead of locating the plot and characters within a specifiable geography, the setting is a train station whose locale is not disclosed until later. Where the lack of articles in *Living* resonates with its themes, the same style here is insistently impervious to interpretation. Which fog? Which bird? Plumbing down not into an apron, but to Miss Fellowes' feet, the pigeon was disturbed by an untold phenomenon; the lack of clarity carries over to Miss Fellowes' actions, as she inexplicably chooses to wash the pigeon's body and to carry it around with her in a brown paper bag for the rest of the novel. When soon after, she falls deathly ill, the cause is again not clear: it may or may not have to do with the pigeon, and it may or may not have to do with the cruel neglect of her niece, whom she had come to see off with the other members of her coterie of bright young things. Where pigeons have a history of being message-bearers, this one carries too many, or none at all.

The subject of *Party Going* could not be more different to *Living* because it turns to the urban rich, idle, and apolitical instead of a "proletariat" cast. Superficially at least, *Party Going* is about a group of characters going on holiday to the south of France, only to be caught in the titular gerund because the fog has suspended all trains. For a text concerned with "the neurotic anxieties and erotic manoeuvrings of a few conspicuously spoiled, silly young rich waiting for train," in John Updike's summary, *Party Going* has generated the most erudite literary critiques out of any Green novel.[82] Where mundanity and banality were taken as aspects of the "truthfulness" of *Living*'s ethnography, the obscurity and mocking triviality of *Party Going* demand explanation. Indeed, Green's book, which he laboured over for most of the thirties (the novel ends with the signature "London, 1931-1938"), is most often read as a recursive treatment not of thirties documentary realism, but of high modernism. Taking place over the course of a

single day, it appears to share affinities with one-day city texts like *Ulysses* (1922) and *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). Suggesting limbo and purgatory, the train station, according to Frank Kermode, is an homage to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922): "death's dream kingdom, this concourse, this place of departures… in the unreal City of London, full of commuters, brothers and sisters of that crowd that flows over London Bridge at nine and back at five-thirty: I had not thought death had undone so many."[83]

The key difference between Green's text and those of his high modernist predecessors, of course, is that the image of death, and of sudden death from above in particular, has very specific connotations in 1939, two years after the aerial bombing of Guernica. That Miss Fellowes' deathly illness is inflicted by her own macabre preoccupations, or by others' mistreatment, is especially instructive: the non-physical impacts of aerial bombardment, such as psychological debilitation and societal disorder, were key concerns of air power theorists like Basil Liddell Hart. Nevertheless, while recent scholarship has made much of the aerial view's relationship to totalitarianism and to aerial warfare, these need to be understood within its more fundamental connection to the politics of knowledge capture.[84] From at least the desert warfare of the First World War, where aerial survey saw the marked application of scientific expertise to waging war, the aerial view became a tool for the manipulation or maintenance of hierarchy and power; this continued in the form of colonial administration and "policing" in the immediate years after.[85] What is so terrifying about the aerial view is not simply the fact that it acted as a shorthand for the use of aerial bombardment, but that it suggested one's attainment of sight and knowledge at the expense and deprivation of another's. And there is no greater contrast than that between the bomber's domineering perspective from the air and the spatial and temporal lacuna experienced by the air-raid victim who cannot know when or where violence will strike.

Party Going is therefore both opaque and impenetrable on one level, and over-determined and ostentatious on another. The novel is infused with foreboding air-anxiety. The walls of the train station hotel are adorned with pictures of Nero fiddling while Rome burns, suggesting the

location as a holding space for a certain apocalypse to come. There are repeated references to slaughterhouses: "About this beastly train I can't imagine why they are keeping us here like sheep in a market" (404). Anticipating or providing the inspiration for Cyril Connolly's "Comment" in the first issue of *Horizon* in 1940—"At the moment civilisation is on the operating table, and we sit in the waiting room"—one of the partygoers, Julia, "thought it [the station] was like an enormous doctor's waiting room and that it would be like that when they were all dead and waiting at the gates" (414).[86] "My darling, my darling," she says, "in this awful place I wondered if we weren't all dead really" (ibid).

Fears of aerial violence fuel the upper-class characters' prejudice. "After all," Julia reasons, "one must not hear too many cries for help in this world"; as if to illustrate the point, she marvels at the silence she imposes on her hotel room after forcing her windows shut (438). While the rich barricade themselves inside the terminus hotel behind steel doors, locking out the working-class commuters on the station floor, the latter ludicrously chant "WE WANT TRAINS" and paranoia mounts about the potential violence of collective hysteria, a much-discussed topic during the build-up to the war.[87] The stationmaster warns of the possible consequences of mass panic in a confined space, recalling an earlier incident of overcrowding in the station when "[f]ifty-two had been injured and compensated and one of them was little Tommy Tucker, now in a school for cripples, only fourteen years of age, and to be supported all his life at the railway company's expense" (436-7). Learning that an estimated thirty thousand are currently in the train station, Julia looks out the window at the crowd below and says, "It's terrifying… I didn't know there were so many people in the world" (437). Where the aerial view in *Living* served to link together the "thousands" of factory workers to Bridesley and to each other, in *Party Going*, the "thousands of Smiths, thousands of Alberts, hundreds of Marys, woven tight as any office carpet" on the station floor represent, above all else, would-be victims of aerial bombardment. "What targets… what targets for a bomb," an anonymous onlooker quips (483).

Doubtless, fears of the undiscerning capabilities of the bomber relate to both its physical and societal effects. The conspicuous spatial separation between classes in the station reinforces the very precariousness and vulnerability of the party's social elevation, as the "mass" below, in Julia's eyes, threaten to overrun the hotel and imperil, physically or financially, the rich. If Auden's aerial view suggested the range and variety of British society, then in *Party Going*, it suggests its susceptibility to war's indiscriminate effects. The fog, after all, has "smudged" everyone, and to recall Stanley Baldwin's dramatic phrase, no matter who or where one is, "The bomber will always get through" (392).[88] While clearly representing death from the air, the other way that birds have been appearing in interwar cultural phenomenology—as reaffirmations of the nation, knowable through empirical fieldwork—is precisely what is under question.

With domestic and international events presaging the shake-up of Britain's socio-economic landscape, the novel conveys a certainty of change matched only by the uncertainty of what that change looks like. The characters therefore spend an awful lot of time trying to read meaning into the inapprehensible, like Julia, who fusses relentlessly over her travelling charms, which symbolise, precisely, symbolism. And when she sees three seagulls on her way to the station, then remembers them as two seagulls, and then later again remembers them as two doves, finding the latter species the most comforting, we are aware that the details in the story, which would constitute textual metaphors or symbols in a novel like *Living*, are here always in flux. The only definable aspect of *Party Going*'s birds is their insistent, ominous presence, and with them, the narrative creates an indecipherable referential mania with savage insouciance. Amabel's unexpected presence at the station is compared to her having "dropped out of the sky", and she is frequently described with bird-imagery, her breathing like "softly beaten wings," her seductiveness like the "darkness of… plumes" (502, 482). Birds also appear in off-handed comments without following up: "If he was a bird…he would not last long" (417); "Go on if you like and pick up some bird, alive or dead" (472). Expressions like "kill[ing] two birds with

one stone" take on an added layer of dark comedy and menace as they appear jarringly out of context in the dialogue (477).

Ultimately, in the "everything unexplained" world of *Party Going*'s indefinite, article-less fogs and birds, people are the primary subjects of epistemological opacity (384). Characters are so indistinguishable that they are referred to by multiple names (as with Evelyn and Evelyna), and so interchangeable that a lover does not even know to whom he is more attracted (does Max prefer Angela to Amabel or Julia to both?). They constantly fail to understand, or are afraid to truly understand, each other's motivations (the only thing scarier than Max lying to Julia, she thinks, is if he was telling her the truth [413]). They do not even seem to understand themselves ("'What do we know about anyone?' said Julia, thinking of herself" [434]). While in one sense viewing the party and the crowd from the perspective of the helmeted airman, the reader of the novel is also placed in the grounded view of the Mass Observer. Rod Mengham has contrasted the Mass Observer's view against the hawk's-eye view, arguing that while both are interested in the perceiving of social reality, one is authoritarian and panoptic, while the other is "shifting, transitory, partial."[89] A Mass Observer's view is frequently obscured by passers-by and traffic, Mengham writes, and lacking the airman's "position of supreme advantage," it cannot "dominate imaginatively a given landscape and reduce it to order."[90] Unlike the "poetic anthropology" of *Living*, in *Party Going*, we are given information but not quite the message, more poetry and less anthropology.

Pigeons aflame

In his belief in the freedoms and possibilities accorded by the indeterminate and the irrelevant, regardless of one's social standing, Green's overarching ideology is not of a political but a philosophical kind. This concern undergirds most of his books, but the changing contexts of the interwar period, specifically, add a different tenor; his depictions of the quotidian and the everyday shift from suggesting literary naturalism to signifying profound changes in the modern

experience and understanding of total war. "[T]he everyday being always before what affirms it and yet incessantly re-constituting itself beyond all that negates it," as Maurice Blanchot writes, the idea of the everyday in *Party Going* is an idiom for an age defined by dread.[91]

Later in the war, observation not as elegy but as mobilisation would characterise the home front. Organizations like the Air-Raid Precautions and the Home Guard tasked observers with looking out for signs of the enemy and the foreign other. Other pre-existing observational bodies adapted to war, such as the Meteorological (Met) Office, whose number of observing stations expanded rapidly in relation to the increasing demand for forecasts, particularly for aircraft operations. The Observer Corps, created in 1925 after the First World War's Zeppelin bombing raids made air defence a priority, took on new visibility as an amateur organization engaging in the visual detection, identification, tracking, and reporting of aircraft over Great Britain.[92]

For bodies of observation from the thirties like the BTO, observation was also perceived in terms of its wartime utility. The social and psychological benefits of scientific bird-watching, praised for encouraging "constructive and detached thought," would by 1944 be seen to furnish individuals with a "sound critical spirit" to offset the "primitive fear response of the mass population." For "[t]he thought of total war, of total destruction, deprives men of their power to think clearly and act sensibly," wrote doctor and psychologist A. M. Meerloo in *Total War and the Human Mind* (1944). "If all these factors are present, mass fear can be so violent as to disorganise a whole country."[93] By October 1939, the council of the BTO recommended that members should keep calm and carry on their activities: war would "disorganise" lives but "many… would find time (often more time than usual) to keep up their observations on birds."[94] As Macdonald writes of wartime bird-watching, "the creation of organised citizen-scientists could be seen as legitimate war-work."[95]

Party Going seems to foreground its relationship to this changing culture of observation through the characters' own observations of the much-remarked mysterious man who lurks

about the station. Likened by critics to the red-headed stranger of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* (1912), or to Hermes, the god who "conducts the dead to the underworld," the man is a cypher with an unrecognizable social identity: he adopts a variety of accents, from Yorkshire to Brummagen, to a vaguely-described "educated voice," and as a sort of chameleon, he is able to pass in and out of the apparently impermeable terminus hotel (426).[96] We know that it is not beyond Mass Observers to disguise their appearance or their accent to observe as inconspicuously as possible. Harrisson himself admitted that he passed as a "native" only with difficulty at Bolton, pretending to come "from another dialect area only a few miles away" to justify his "so-called Oxford accent."[97] If not a Mass Observer, Green's mysterious figure is certainly a social observer of some kind, but instead of mere "close detachment," his unnerving presence suggests surveillance or control. Taking him for a hotel detective, Alex cautions, "They won't have people, well, people who are very bad in hotels" (428).

Hence the other reason for *Party Going*'s foreboding tone. To observe, after all, is not simply to see, spot, watch over, record, notice, or identify; it is also, to go back to the Latin *observare*, to follow rules, codes, regulations, and practices, to conform by seeing "within a prescribed set of possibilities," where the observer "is embedded in a system of conventions and limitations."[98] Harrisson long denied that his observers were class spies, but he might as well have been describing secret agents when he depicted the typical Mass Observer as "a participant, invisibly controlled and disciplined from outside, reporting continuously to head-quarters."[99] Although it did not engage in espionage, since the beginning, MO borrowed from the rhetoric of spying, as with Madge's and Harrisson's unintentionally panopticonic phrase "the observation by everyone of everyone, including themselves," or Malinowski's description of the organization as a "nation-wide intelligence service."[100] As is now well known, the Ministry of Information became interested in MO after the latter gauged public reactions to the Munich crisis. After 1940, MO would become involved with them and with the Naval Intelligence to help collect data on public morale, including responses to political leaders. More than ever, others saw the

organization as a network of snoops. The story of its transformation during war, as with the trajectory from *Living* to *Party Going*, traces the culture of collective observation as it negotiated with the muddled boundaries between surveyance and surveillance—a tension that already underpinned earlier developments in observatory practices and the aerial view.

All this becomes the backstory to Green's wartime novel following from *Party Going*, *Caught* (1943). About unarticulated violence and repressed familial histories, the novel examines the relationship between the upper-class Richard Roe, who volunteers for the Auxiliary Fire Service, and the lower-class Richard Pye, the professional fireman who trains him. "It brings everyone together, there's that much to a war," Roe says, seeing his role as righteous downward mobility: "he thought he had grasped the fact that, from now on, dressed like this, and that was why roadmen called him mate, he was one of the thousand million that toiled and spun."[101] The narrative makes clear, however, the ambiguity of his social assimilation. As his complicated relationship with Pye indicates—the conflagrative anagramming of their names is much remarked—sharing physical and socio-economic spaces are not the same thing.[102] And as fighting blitz fires become a nightly routine, the firemen increasingly observe one another, in both senses of the term. In the Fire Service, everyone "seem[s] to be every minute spying on each other, and telling": "Why is everything so secret in our place, I can't see why?" Roe sighs (104). The novel ends with Roe being knocked unconscious by blitz fires, and with his struggle to express his "nervous debility" (176). Burning pigeons re-appear in his flashbacks: "Only the pigeons flying about burning. Some were on the ground, walking in circles into the flames, fascinated" (195). With the blitz fully underway, Green's pigeons no longer suggest foreboding prognosis, but the observation of lived trauma.

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[1] Paul Nash, *Outline: An Autobiography and Other Writings* (London: Faber and Faber, 1949), 251.
[2] Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts* (London: Penguin, 2000), 114.
[3] Quoted in Paul Saint-Amour, "Air War Prophecy and Interwar Modernism," *Comparative Literature Studies* 42.2 (2005), 130-61 (138).
[4] Tim Hamilton, *Identification: Friend or Foe* (London: Imperial War Museum/HMSO, 1994), 78-9.

[5] Kitty Hauser, *Shadow Sites: Photography, Archaeology, and the British Landscape 1927-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 280.
[6] Helen Macdonald, "'What makes you a scientist is the way you look at things': ornithology and the observer 1930-55," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 33 (2002), 53-77 (59).
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid., 58.
[9] Ibid.
[10] James Fisher, *Watching Birds* (London: Collins, 1940), 3.
[11] Sarah Cole, *At the Violet Hour: Modernism and Violence in England and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
[12] Jan Mieszkowski, *Watching War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 158.
[13] Paul Saint-Amour, *Tense Future: Modernism, Total War, Encyclopedic Form* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
[14] Mieszkowski, 149.
[15] Giorgio Melchiori, *The Tightrope Walkers: Studies of Mannerism in Modern English Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956), 193.
[16] Rod Mengham, *The Idiom of the Time: The Writings of Henry Green* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 32.
[17] Christopher Isherwood had used the phrase; see Henry Green, *Surviving: The Uncollected Writings of Henry Green* (New York: Penguin, 1992), 247.
[18] James Buzard, "Mass Observation, Modernism, and Auto-ethnography," *Modernism/modernity* 4.3 (1997), 93-122 (106).
[19] Peter Keating, "Introduction", in *Into Unknown England, 1886-1913: Selections from the Social Explorers*, ed. Peter Keating (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976), 11-32 (13).
[20] Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 211; Carol A. Wipf-Miller, "Fictions of 'Going over': Henry Green and the New Realism," *Twentieth-Century Literature* 44.2 (Summer 1998), 135-54; Buzard, "Mass Observation", 111.
[21] Wipf-Miller, 138.
[22] Clive Hart, "The Structure and Technique of *Party Going*," *Yearbook of English Studies* 1 (1971), 185-99 (185); Walter Allen, "Henry Green," *Penguin New Writing* (1945), 144-55 (146); Eudora Welty, "Henry Green: A Novelist of the Imagination," *Texas Quarterly* 4.3 (Autumn 1961), 246-56 (253).
[23] James Wood, "A Plausible Magic: The Novels of Henry Green," in *British Fiction after Modernism: The Novel at Mid-Century*, ed. Marina MacKay and Lyndsey Stonebridge (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), 50-59 (50); Jessica Burstein, *Cold Modernism: Literature, Fashion, Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 14.
[24] Beci Carver, *Granular Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2014), 2, her emphases.
[25] Wood, 50; Nick Shepley, *Henry Green: Class, Style, and the Everyday* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 10.
[26] Quoted in Jeremy Treglown, *Romancing: The Life and Work of Henry Green* (London: Faber & Faber, 2000), 58-9.
[27] Shepley, 13.
[28] Quoted in Macdonald, 55.
[29] Quoted in ibid., 60.
[30] Ibid., 61.
[31] See also David Matless on "geographical citizenship" for more on the relationship between national and regional identities and one's conduct in nature, in "'The art of right living': landscape and citizenship, 1918-1939," in Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift (eds.), *Mapping the Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation* (London: Routledge, 1995), 93-122.
[32] Mark Toogood, "Modern observations: new ornithology and the science of ourselves, 1920-1940," *Journal of Historical Geography* 37 (2011), 348-57 (351).
[33] Ibid.
[34] Macdonald, 58.
[35] Toogood, 354.
[36] *Britain by Mass Observation*, arranged and written by Tom Harrisson and Charles Madge (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1939). For Bronislaw Malinowski, the organization's true potential was its

ability to reveal "[t]he way in which… infinitely small, infinitely many details of social reality work, act and integrate into big collective movements, the manner in which they are related to legislation, politics, declarations of policy and acts of State" (Charles Madge and Tom Harrisson, ed., *Mass Observation: First Year's Work, 1938-39* [London: Lindsay Drummond, 1938], 89).
[37] For the history of the BTO, see Ronald Hickling, ed., *Enjoying Ornithology: A Celebration of Fifty Years of the BTO, 1933-1983* (Poyser: Calton, 1983). Helpful accounts of MO include Nick Hubble, *Mass Observation and Everyday Life: Culture, History, Theory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and Tom Jeffery, *Mass Observation: A Short History* (Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1978).
[38] David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London: Reakton Books, 1998), 259.
[39] British Trust for Ornithology, *First Annual Report* (Oxford: BTO, 1935), 32.
[40] Charles Madge and Humphrey Jennings, "They Speak for Themselves: Mass Observation and Social Narrative," *Life & Letters Today* 17 (1937), 37-42; Buzard, 96-7.
[41] For example, the working-class writer Jack Common complained about "the attempts of nice young men to penetrate into working-class pubs and try to get to know the workers" (Jack Common, *Freedom of the Streets* [People's Publications, 1988], 2-3). As Hubble notes, the real complaint is that both social-realist fiction and the social anthropology adopted by MO could only ever define the masses negatively in contrast to middle-class individualism (2).
[42] Julian Huxley, "Preface," *Mass Observation* by Charles Madge and Tom Harrisson (London: Frederick Muller, 1937), 5-7 (6).
[43] Tom Harrisson, *Living Through the Blitz* (London: William Collins, 1976), 11.
[44] It was between 1933 and 1935, during his stay in the New Hebrides as Oxford University's ornithologist with the V'enen Taut people (or the Big Nambas of Malekula, as they were called), that Harrisson began to train his eye on human rather than avian societies. As Harrisson explained on a 1938 BBC programme devoted to MO: "I went to an island in the Pacific called Malekula and spent three years there living among cannibals, whom I found were neither better nor worse than old Harrovians. I tried to get an inside picture of their customs and ways of thinking, and for this I found it essential to live as they lived… Then I came back to England and went to live in a Lancashire industrial town, trying to apply the same principles of observation to our civilization" (quoted in Buzard, 105).
[45] Hubble, 48.
[46] Henry Green, *Pack My Bag: A Self-Portrait* (London: Vintage, 2000), 141; Matless, *Landscape*, 259.
[47] Wipf-Miller, 139.
[48] Quoted in Jeffery, 2.
[49] Harrisson, *Living*, 39.
[50] Maurice B. Wright, "Psychological Emergencies in War Time," *British Medical Journal* (9 September 1939), 576-8 (576).
[51] Buzard, 106. He is quoting from Jeffery's *Mass Observation*, 9.
[52] "The New Europe," *Times*, July 1, 1940.
[53] John Maynard Keynes, in his socially progressive pamphlet *How to Pay for the War* (1940), argues that the war effort should be financed by higher taxation and compulsory saving to avoid inflation. The perceived equalizing nature of war would be a core aspect of the myth of the blitz and the now much-debated thesis, put forward by Richard Titmuss in *Problems of Social Policy* (1950), that war fostered social solidarity and therefore social reform.
[54] Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 10. The idea of the "repatriation of anthropology" comes from George E. Marcus and Michael M. J. Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
[55] Esty, 2.
[56] Charles Andrews's *Writing Against War: Literature, Activism, and the British Peace Movement* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2017) is an informative study of activist organizations and writers between the world wars.
[57] Green, *Pack*, 141; Marina MacKay, *Modernism and World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 92.
[58] Madge and Harrison, *First*, 121.
[59] Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea* (London: Routledge, 1922), xv.

[60] Peacocks and swallows also feature in Green's oeuvre, especially in *Loving* (1945) and *Concluding* (1948), respectively.
[61] Treglown, 14-5.
[62] Green, *Pack*, 1; quoted in Treglown, 68.
[63] Treglown, 71.
[64] Ibid., 73. An early attempt to write about factory life (which shows similar stylistic experimentations as *Living*, and which also features pigeons) is a sketch titled "Saturday", drafted between 1927-28.
[65] Treglown, 72.
[66] Quoted in Martin Johnes, "Pigeon Racing and Working-class Culture in Britain, c. 1870-1950," *Cultural and Social History* 4.3 (2007), 361-83 (367).
[67] Ibid., 373.
[68] Quoted in ibid., 369.
[69] Treglown, 104.
[70] Henry Green, *Loving; Living; Party Going* (London: Vintage, 2005), 207. Subsequent citations appear in the text.
[71] Treglown, 73.
[72] Lara Feigel, *Literature, Cinema and Politics 1930-1945: Reading Between the Frames* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 89.
[73] Buzard, 106, his emphases.
[74] For the aerial view in the thirties, see Cunningham, 155-211.
[75] W. H. Auden, *Selected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson (New York: Vintage, 1989), 43.
[76] Ibid., 14.
[77] Cunningham, 193. It should be noted that Auden's early poems also omitted articles before he "fell into some slovenly verbal habits. The definite article is always a headache," as he later wrote (W. H. Auden, *Collected Shorter Poems, 1927-1957* [London: Faber, 1966], 16).
[78] Quoted in Alan Ross, "Green, with Envy: Critical Reflections and an Interview", *London Magazine* 6.4 (January-June 1959), 23.
[79] MacKay, 97.
[80] Green, *Surviving*, 246.
[81] W. H. Auden, "Ironworks and University," in *Prose and Travel Books in Prose and Verse, 1926-1938*, ed. Edward Mendelson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 460-3 (461).
[82] John Updike, "Introduction" to Henry Green, *Loving, Living, Party Going* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 12-3.
[83] Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 8.
[84] See, for example, Elizabeth Evans's "Air War, Propaganda, and Woolf's Anti-Tyranny Aesthetic," *Modern Fiction Studies* 59.1 (Spring 2013), 53-82, which tracks how Woolf uses the aerial view to "both represent and subtly undercut the seductive power of authoritarian knowledge" (54).
[85] See Mark Neocleous, *War Power, Police Power* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014). Chapter Four of Peter Adey's *Aerial Life: Spaces, Mobilities, Affects* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) offers a brief but helpful discussion of aerial surveying and photography as key "weapons" in the exercising of colonial power. Saint-Amour gives an important reading of modernism's *annus mirabilis*, 1922, in terms of British colonial air control over territories in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other sites in *Tense Future*, 71-6.
[86] Quoted in Stephen Spender, *The Thirties and After: Poetry, Politics, People (1933-75)* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1978), 88.
[87] The Air-Raid Precautions Sub-Committee, formed in 1924, made early pronouncements declaring that the moral and psychological effects of air attacks would be disproportionate to their material effects. See Edgar Jones, Robin Woolven, Bill Durodie, and Simon Wessley, "Civilian Morale During the Second World War: Responses to Air Raids re-examined," *Social History of Medicine* 17.3 (2004), 463-79.
[88] Quoted in A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1961), 116.
[89] Rod Mengham, "Bourgeois News: Humphrey Jennings and Charles Madge," *Jacket 20* (December 2002), originally published in *New Formations* 44 (Autumn 2001), 26-33.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Maurice Blanchot, "Everyday Speech," *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 241-2.

[92] It became the Royal Observer Corps in 1941; the title "Royal" was awarded for services to the Battle of Britain.
[93] A. M. Meerloo, *Total War and the Human Mind* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1944), 34.
[94] BTO, *First Annual*, 1.
[95] Macdonald, 63.
[96] Kermode, 8.
[97] Quoted in Cunningham, 251.
[98] Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, M. A.: An October Book, MIT Press, 1992), 6.
[99] Quoted in Cunningham, 251.
[100] Madge and Harrisson, *Mass Observation*, 10, 83. Malinowski nevertheless contrasted MO's type of observation against the "national spy and police systems" of fascist and communist governments (121).
[101] Henry Green, *Caught* (London: Harvill, 2001), 46, 49. Subsequent citations appear in the text.
[102] See, for example, what Lyndsey Stonebridge calls their "anagrammatical py(e)ro(e)technic coupling" in *The Writing of Anxiety: British Culture at Mid-Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 58.